

An Excerpt from the Book

‘River of Compassion’

by Paramahansa Prajnanananda



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Blessings of Shri Babaji Maharaj

Meditation is the key to success, God is infinite and the spiritual journey is endless. Even the realized masters spend hours in seclusion, *sadhana* and meditation. Meditation generates a magnetic field that attracts the blessings of Great Masters, which can be transmitted to sincere seekers. Every *Kriyavan* cherishes a strong desire to have the vision of the Great Guru, Shri Babaji Maharaj, the deathless yogi of incomprehensible glory.

It was the year 1949. Brahmachari Rabinarayan was deeply engrossed in meditation in his closed room at Karar Ashram. The room was suddenly lit with an unusual glow of light. Brahmachari Rabinarayan opened his eyes to behold Babaji Maharaj who stood silently by him. He had broad shoulders, large eyes and his hair and forehead were covered with a cloth.

Brahmachari Rabinarayan was greatly astonished. He wondered if it was a dream or a vision. He could not believe his eyes. How could this man enter into a locked room? He did not recognize Babaji. Nobody can recognize him unless he revealed himself to him or her.

Brahmachari Rabinarayan looked at this mysterious person wondering who it might be. Babaji Maharaj advanced a few steps and closed the eyes of Brahmachariji with a soft touch of his gracious fingers. His touch brought a flood of light. When he opened his eyes again there was no one in the room. But his heart replied to his anxious query in that wonder struck state, "That must be Shri Babaji Maharaj."

The moment he grasped the truth, tears rolled down his face and he thought, "How ignorant I am! O Beloved Guru! You came physically. You were here, stood by me and smiled at me, touched and blessed me with grace, but I did not recognize you. I did not touch your feet or offer you a seat, I did not serve you or talk with you, what a fool I am?" He entered into his small meditation and puja room where the idol of Mother Kali was installed and closing the doors, prayed to the Divine Mother and beloved Guru Maharaj with deep love.

Again Shri Babaji Maharaj appeared in this small closed room and touched the head of Rabinarayan and blessed him. "Why so impatient?" He said, "I am satisfied with your *sadhana*."

That wonderful touch of Babaji Maharaj again sent him into the superconscious realm of peace and tranquility and brilliant effulgence. Brahmachari Rabinarayan touched his head at the holy feet of the Great Guru. Then the omniscient Guru Shri Babaji looked at the plate with small pieces of fruits arranged nicely for offering to the deity. He asked Rabinarayan, "If I tasted these fruits meant for the Divine Mother, will you offer them to Her again?" It is not customary to offer left over food to the Deity. Without any hesitation Rabinarayan replied, "Why not? To me there is no difference between Shri Guru and God. My venerable Guruji! I would be honored by your kind acceptance of my humble homage."

Babaji Maharaj pleased with the befitting reply smiled and ate a piece of banana and blessed him. He said, "I am glad of your achievements. But remember there is no end to meditation. The deeper you dive, the richer you emerge, for new realms unfold in succession. So while sticking to meditation tenaciously, you propound and reveal Kriya to others. I bless you and empower you to propagate Kriya. Your touch will give divine revelation to the seeking souls. Now I will take leave of you. Don't follow me now. Continue meditating deeply."

He then meditated for some time. Then he opened the door of the temple-meditation room. It was already noon. The students of the Ashram school were playing outside. Brahmachariji anxiously asked them if they saw a young man with a short white waist cloth come out. They replied in the negative. This special appearance and blessings of this immortal Yogi, Shri Babaji Maharaj gave him new encouragement and inspiration to continue meditation much more intensely.

In 1960 after his initiation into monastic order, he desired to see Shri Babaji again and traveled to Ranikhet, in the Himalayas where Shri Shyamacharan Lahiri was initiated into this sacred Kriya Yoga technique by Babaji himself. He reached the vicinity by a taxi. He came to know from the local people about a naked monk who lived a little high up in the hills. This Sadhu with a huge body sat naked by a fireplace (*dhuni*) with his eyes open with a vacant gaze, apparently merged in infinity. With a little trouble he reached the place and saw the monk from a distance. He was hesitant to disturb this yogi, absorbed in meditation.

But the yogi called him near saying, "Come here my child, take a seat. Eat something. Comfort yourself. You came with a great desire to see Babaji. You can ask your questions later." Then the naked yogi served him hot chappatis and ghee from two earthen pots in the room. Hariharananda (previously known as Rabinarayan) felt quite rejuvenated with rest, food and the love of this yogi.

Then the yogi gave the directions and the route to reach the cave of Babaji. The Yogi further added, "Even with all your efforts you may not see him unless he approves." Taking leave from him, Hariharananda proceeded without delay to his Guru's cave.

The place was full of natural beauty with fruits and flowers. Enjoying the grand beauty of the Himalayas, he climbed up the narrow path with care and caution. After some time he could not walk any more. He sat down to rest and meditate. Eternity started whispering. He heard the melodious tone of the divine guru, Babaji Maharaj, "My child! Why are you taking so much trouble to come here? I appeared twice before you in your Guru's hermitage. When I wish, I will appear before you on my own. I am fully satisfied with you. You will inundate the western countries with the streams of Kriya Yoga. You will not get my vision here now. Go back and feel my omnipresence."

mantramulam gurorvakyam — the words of the guru, the preceptor, are the root of mantra, the key to success. Keeping the blessed instruction in his heart, he came back with salutations to Babaji.

Chapter 6

Acharya to Swami

Acharya of Karar Ashram, Puri

Karar Ashram founded by Priyanath Karar (Swami Shriyukteshwarji's pre-monastic name) in 1903 is a place of Kriya Yoga practice, meditation and spiritual enlightenment. Swami Shriyukteshwar regularly visited this ashram and stayed several months at a time with many monks and disciples who accompanied him. He was a very strict, disciplined master who made everyone follow the routine of ashram life. He breathed his last on the premises in 1936.

After the *mahasamadhi* of Shriyukteshwarji, Paramahansa Yogananda became the head of Karar Ashram and Swami Satyananda became the acting head in the absence of Yoganandaji. Yoganandaji, after initiating Brahmachari Sudhir into monastic life in the name of Swami Sevananda, appointed him as the Swami-in-charge of the ashram, Acharya of Karar Ashram. Sevanandaji continued in this capacity till 1950. He was helping Brahmachari Rabinarayan in every respect.

During the period of his *sadhana* from 1938-48, Brahmachari Rabinarayan also looked after the development of Karar Ashram, his holy abode of spiritual practice and realization.

Apart from regular meditation, the Ashram also managed a school for children. The name of the school was Yukteshwar Vidyapitha. Brahmachari Rabinarayan also spent some of his leisure time teaching the students English grammar. The old students still remember his inimitable way of teaching. Because of his love and divinity, he was dear to all.

Brahmachari Rabinarayan had regular correspondence with his beloved Guru and guide Paramahansa Yogananda. Paramahamsaji was aware of his disciple's progress and other activities. In the year 1950, he appointed Brahmachari as the Acharya of Karar Ashram. Acharya means one who is rector and preceptor of the Ashram, who guides others on the spiritual path, initiating true seekers through his exemplary character and idealistic behavior.

From 1950 on, Brahmachari Rabinarayan took an active role in bringing about a complete transformation of the Ashram. Until then the Ashram had no boundary walls, and the grounds were full of thorn bushes. The samadhi place of Shriyukteshwar was a hut without walls. The financial situation was not very sound. Brahmachariji wrote to Paramahamsaji about all these things. Looking at the constructive outlook of Brahmachariji, he sent some donation to construct the samadhi shrine of Shriyukteshwarji, his guru-preceptor. In 1951, under the direct supervision of Brahmachariji and with the assistance of Sananda Lal Ghosh, the younger brother of Paramahansa Yogananda, a beautiful temple for Shriyukteshwar was constructed on the samadhi place of this great yogi, with a blooming lotus on the top. Even now this temple is charged with strong spiritual vibration. With the instructions of Brahmachariji, a beautiful marble carving of Swami Shriyukteshwar in a meditative pose was made in Benares and installed in this temple.

Brahmachari Rabinarayan was a dynamic personality, a realized yogi, an affectionate teacher, proficient in astrology, palmistry, well versed in scriptures, with a deep spiritual insight, a manager, a gardener (with good knowledge of landscaping), a mason, a writer, a singer, and also a doctor.

The ashram land was triangular in shape, looking like a sand hill. At that time only two complexes were there, one the school building called Vidyapith, and the other a two-storied residential block. Both the buildings were not in good condition due to lack of maintenance. In a short period of time all these buildings were renovated. A beautiful pathway from the entrance of the Ashram to the samadhi shrine and from the samadhi shrine to the upper part of the land was constructed by Brahmachariji himself.

In his leisure time he came out, even when he was observing silence, and spent some time in making this footpath with his own hands using bricks and mortar. The blazing rays of the sun did not disturb him in his sincere work. While he worked, a visitor came everyday and was holding an umbrella over his head to protect Brahmachariji from the scorching sun chanting, "Om Namah Shivaya" (1 bow to Shiva). He perceived Lord Shiva in Brahmachariji. But this

made him uncomfortable. He wrote a small note to the visitor requesting him not to come daily and if he had something to discuss, to come on Sunday at a particular time to talk with him.

Brahmachariji also had a boundary wall built around the ashram. Soon a new building with a guest room and a meditation hall were also constructed. The rest of the open land served as grounds for mass congregation and accommodated several hundred people at satsanga (spiritual congregation) meetings.

The ashram land, which was previously barren and full of thorns and weeds, constantly eroded during monsoon rains, was transformed into a beautiful garden. The teacher, the students and other ashramites spent some of their time in seva (selfless service with love and devotion) and helped in all these projects. The ashram became vibrant with spirituality and beauty. The name of the locality was Swargadwar, meaning the door to heaven. Karar Ashram became a 'beauty spot', a real Swargadwar in a short time.

Realizing the need for a teacher of Kriya Yoga in the Ashram and having known the spiritual attainment of Brahmachari Rabinarayan, Paramahansa Yogananda empowered him in the year 1951 to teach Kriya Yoga to sincere seekers.

From that time onwards he has been working hard for the spiritual upliftment of the disciples. He is a Guru with a difference. The work of the Guru is not just uttering a mantra in the ear of the disciple, but to help bring inner transformation in the life of a seeker. Purifying the body, he initiates and guides and helps the disciples for the simultaneous development of body, mind, intellect and soul. He has been working tirelessly to make his disciples highly advanced in the spiritual path.

He is a child with children, young with the youth, and wise with the aged. He is like a mother, father, friend, philosopher and guide to all who come near him.

Paramahansa Yogananda was planning to visit India in 1952. He wrote to his friend and brother monk, Swami Satyananda about this. He had the wish to see the Karar Ashram of his beloved Guru in its new form. He has expressed it to his younger brother Sanandlal Ghosh (Gora Da) through letters.

In March 1952, Brahmachariji was visiting his parents in his hometown of Habibpur in West Bengal, India. He was meditating and had a strange vision. He got up from meditation and described it to his learned father - who said that it indicated the physical departure of a great Guru.

Brahmachariji immediately left for Puri. As soon as he reached the ashram, he heard the news of the "Mahasamadhi" of Paramahansa Yogananda, which occurred on March 7th.

In 1952, Swami Satyananda became "Sadhu Sabhapati," the permanent President of the Ashram and continued till his mahasamadhi. Brahmachari Rabinarayan assisted him in making the ashram efficient and beautiful.

In The Holy Company of Jagadguru Bharatikrishna

Acharya Shankara was the reformer of sanatana dharma, the eternal life style based on God-consciousness. In his 32 years of life span, he traveled all over India, revived glamour to the lost spiritual environment, authored commentaries on the major Upanishads, Brahmasutra and the Bhagavad Gita, along with other 62 books on spiritual life and several hymns and prayers, all in Sanskrit. He established four Peethas in four corners of India, Badrinath in North, Jagannath Puri in East, Shringeri in South and Dwaraka in West. These four Peethas are entrusted with the responsibility of safeguarding the spiritual heritage. The heads of these four Peethas are known as Jagadguru Shankaracharyas.

His Holiness Swami Bharati Krishna Teertha was Shankaracharya of Puri. For thirty-five years he held this responsibility of being the head of this historical institution.

Venkataraman was his pre-monastic name. He was born in March 1884, in Tirunelveli, Madras. He was a brilliant student always ranking high in his academic career. His father P. Narasimha Shastri, was a Tahsildar (revenue officer). In January 1899, he graduated from the high school, as the top student in the state. Then he joined Church Missionary College and later Hindu College in Tirunelveli and graduated with high honors. Then he got his Master's Degree in 1904 from the Bombay campus of American College of Science, Rochester, NY. A versatile genius, he also did his Master's in Sanskrit, Philosophy, English, Mathematics, History and Science. Having studied the different branches of apara vidya (material sciences), he focused his attention on para vidya (spiritual knowledge) under the direct supervision of Shri Satchidananda Shiva Abhinava Narasimha Bharati Swami, H. H. Sankaracharya of Shringeri Peetha. He became proficient in Sanskrit and all the scriptures of the sanatana dharma.

He was the principal of a college in Rajamundry for some time during which he continued seriously his own spiritual practice. After eight years of sincere sadhana, he took sannyasa from Swami Trivikram Teertha of Sharadapeetha at Benaras in the year 1919.

At age 37 he became the Shankaracharya of Dwarakapeetha, and continued till 1925. In the same year he accepted the responsibility of Govardhana peetha, Puri, and left Dwaraka.

He, through his erudite scholarship, simple living, broad outlook, and extensive travel around India, attracted many educated young men to the path of spirituality. Apart from his travel he spent a good period of time in Puri every year. The Sankaracharya Math of Puri is located in between Karar Ashram and Gurudham of Sanyal Mahasaya.

Brahmachari Robinarayan, while visiting his beloved Guruji Shri Sanyal Mahasaya, went to see this great reputed saint of that time. He prostrated flat at the feet of H. H. Swami Bharati Krishna Teertha, with devotion and reverence. The golden complexion of this young Brahmachari, his beautiful eyes full of love, knowledge and yogic power fascinated the Swami.

He asked, "What is your name ?" Brahmachariji replied, "Robinarayan." "What is your family name?" "Rabindranath Bhattacharya." "Bhattacharya! Bhattanam acharya! Acharya, the teacher of the hamlet! Your family is a Guru Family. Isn't it?" "Yes." "Where are you from?" "From the District of Nadia in Bengal." H.H. Jagadguru complemented - "Oh! Then you are the second Gouranga of Nadia !"

Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, a saint, considered a divine incarnation of 15th century was from Nadia and because of his very fair complexion was also known as Gouranga. He flooded the

hearts of people throughout the country with divine love. He was always intoxicated with love for God. He lived for most part of his life in the holy city of Puri.

"Where do you live?" asked the Swami. "Karar Ashram of Shriyukteshwarji, which is very near to this place." Sincerity and simplicity that reflected in the face of this young Brahmachari was bridging a bond of divine relationship between them. In the course of conversation, this reputed monk of the country could foresee the divine destiny of the Brahmachari. He asked about his meditation and inner experience and was pleased with him.

H. H. Shankaracharya was a versatile genius well versed in scriptures, proficient in many languages, and had a thorough knowledge of astrology. So Brahmachari visited him frequently and spent a good period of time serving him, and studying scriptures under his guidance. Through this divine companionship H. H. Sankaracharya came to know about the great achievements of Paramahansa Yoganandaji in the West. Invited by Yoganandaji's organization in USA, H. H. Swami Bharati Krishna Teertha visited USA and also England during the months of February and May 1958. He visited several parts of America giving talks in different congregations not only spiritual, but also academic and intellectual. His logical interpretation of scriptures, his scientific outlook and mathematical knowledge greatly surprised the Western scholars.

He analyzed some sutras (aphorisms) from the Vedas and solved many complicated problems in mathematics, big calculations that would be difficult even with the use of calculators, just by glancing at them and amazed the audiences. Of his several books, Vedic Mathematics and Vedic Metaphysics Sanatana Dharma are still popular. Jagadguru Swami Bharati Krishna was the first and the last Sankaracharya to travel out side of India and go to the West.

Brahmachari Robinarayan became an ardent disciple of H. H. Jagadguru Sankaracharya. He was serving him with due reverence. Jagadguruji was a very strict and disciplined man. He never took food at other places, especially in the company of others. Once he had to take food with others, which was a violation of his own principle. He said to his beloved disciple, "Today surely I will be sick."

His words came true. He had a severe attack of cholera, and he was so weak that he was not able to walk to the toilets. Brahmachariji served him relentlessly as he lay on the floor, cleaning and disinfecting the body till he regained his health. Being extremely strict in his lifestyle Jagadguru Sankaracharya refused to take any medicine. But under the care of Brahmachariji, he regained his health.

In the Bhagavad Gita, the Lord teaches Arjuna, "To know 'That', go to a realized person, bow to him, ask with reverence and serve him with love, then he being a realized person will show you the path of experience." Brahmachari Rabinarayan was fulfilling the teaching of this great scripture in his spiritual life.

Service to Parents

matr devo bhava, pitr devo bhava, acarya devo bhava, atithi devo bhava

Serve the Mother as God, serve the Father as God, serve the Teacher as God and serve the guest as God - is the declaration of the Upanisads.

When a young boy in his adolescence asked his widowed mother for permission to embrace the monastic life, she allowed him to follow that glorious path on one condition, that he should be by her side when she was sick. He kept his word. This happened in the life of Acharya Shankara, the great spiritual reformer, author and philosopher born nearly 1500 years ago.

Ordinarily a renunciate monk does not keep in touch with the family members of pre-monastic life. But in rare cases, there are exceptions. A weak mind may commit mistakes, but a realized soul does not need these rules.

To keep his promise to his own parents, Brahmachari Rabinarayan was occasionally in touch with his parents. Sometimes when relatives visited Puri, they visited him and spent some time in Karar Ashram. Brahmachariji's favorite was his nephew, Debi Prasad Chatterji (popularly known as Debi Baba) the eldest son of his second brother, Pareshnath. Debi Prasad, was intelligent and industrious, and was a favourite of his grandparents, Haripada and Nabin Kali. During his college days, he stayed at Karar Ashram for some time and during that time his uncle, Brahmachari Rabinarayan, initiated him into Kriya Yoga. He was the first disciple of the great Guru, practicing Kriya Yoga, and serving his uncle and Guru in every possible way. His love for God, Gurus and the Ashrams is unique.

The family of Haripada was worshippers of the Divine Mother. They celebrated Navaraatri Durga Puja and also Kaalii Pujaa with all the rituals on a very grand scale. Durga Pujaa was a special occasion for the family as there were several weeks of holidays at that time. All the relatives from far and near came together, to celebrate this special occasion with love, devotion and joy.

This was in the early 50's. Requested by family members, Brahmachari Rabinarayan came to his native place to participate in this festival. They were all happy to see his spiritual progress, which was evident in his words and actions. Before beginning the worship, Haripada approached Brahmachariji with a request, "Can you please perform the puja of the Divine Mother this year? You are not only well-versed in all ritualistic practices, you have also attained the blissful state of realization." Brahmachari Rabinarayan, an obedient son, agreed. But he said, "I will do all the puja. But you should all be patient and participate in utmost devotion." The celebration started with a spiritual thrill in everyone's heart.

On the day of Mahaashtami - the eighth day of the celebration, the father requested his loving son again, "Sannyasi Thakur! Can you not fulfill one wish of mine? I have a long cherished desire to have the vision of the Divine Mother, fully manifested, in all her glory and illumination." Humble Rabinarayan agreed. In the evening, the Puja room (a big hall) was filled with devotees of the Divine Mother. In front of them, on the pedestal, was the earthen idol looking live and showering divine Bliss. Brahmachariji was worshipping, chanting and praying to the Divine Mother with intense love and concentration. Suddenly every one was wonderstruck with their eyes transfixed on the deity. As they watched, the deity and the pedestal were filled with a beautiful blue illumination. The goddess appeared to be alive. All bowed down with great devotion and prayer. It was a rare privilege to see the Divine illumination of Mother Durga.

It was a day of complete transformation for the father, Haripada. He came to his son alone and requested him, "Will you initiate me into Kriya?" It was a rare occasion. Brahmachari Rabinarayan accepted the request. On the day of Upanayana (the sacred thread ceremony) Brahmachari Rabinarayan requested his father to initiate him. His father became his first guru and spiritual guide. Now, after nearly three decades, the same father requested his own realized son to initiate him and be his Guru, as the son excelled him in spiritual practice and experience.

Shri Lahiri Mahasaya also initiated his own father-in-law into Kriya Yoga, which created turmoil in the community of brahmin scholars in Kashi, Benares.

They say it is hard for a doctor to operate on a family member because of the close association. To accept a family member as a guru, especially one who is younger in age is very difficult because one has to surrender oneself with love and reverence to guru. A family member may have a preconceived opinion about the other family member. But here the situation was different. They had all seen Rabinarayan from his childhood. He was special in his behavior and temperament. He never lost his temper with anyone. He was always sympathetic to others, free from ego and vanity. His mother also wanted to be initiated. The Guru in Rabinarayan initiated the loving parents into the sacred technique of Kriya Yoga.

After initiation into the path of Kriya Yoga, Haripada was very happy. He put an end to his orthodox outlook and lengthy ritualistic worship every day and preferred to spend more time in inner calmness and meditation. Some incidents reveal his balanced state of mind and perseverance.

After some time, Brahmachari Rabinarayan receiving the news of the demise of his eldest brother Dr. Bholanath Bhattacharya and went to visit his parents in the village Habibpur to console and comfort them. It was early in the morning when he got off the bus. From a distance he saw a person who looked like his father, coming towards the bus stop. Brahmachariji was surprised as it was too soon for his father to be out, after such a sorrowful incident. It was indeed Haripada and they greeted each other and proceeded towards their home. There was no sign of sorrow or mourning in the face of Haripada, he looked as though nothing untoward had happened. When they reached home, Haripada requested his beloved son, Brahmachariji, to go in and to console his mother who lost consciousness hearing the news of her eldest son's death. This time Brahmachari Rabinarayan stayed with the parents for several days till all the rituals of the death-ceremony were completed. He was surprised at the balanced state of mind of his father under all these circumstances.

One day Haripada came to his monk son and said, "It is not right on your part to spend such a long time away from the Ashram. It was good that you came here at the right time to help your parents. Now it is time to return to your Ashram." Brahmachari Rabinarayan looked at his father and said, "Can I ask you one question? Since I arrived here, I have observed you very closely. I have not found even the slightest touch of sorrow or remorse on your face. You have lost your eldest son and still you are not perturbed. How could you have such self-control? It is a surprise to me!" The father smiled and patted the son's back and said, "Baba! You are a monk. You are not married. How can you understand the joy of being a father? Your eldest brother was our first child who gave us the joy of parenthood. Now he is gone! No doubt it is painful. Still it is a drama. That is why I am not disturbed. I will give you an example. Suppose a person has deposited money in a bank for sometime and then he wants to withdraw the amount. Will the bank be unhappy to give the money back? No, because the bank has already invested the money and enjoyed the interest from that. Likewise, God

deposited this child with us for a short time. We had the pleasure of his company as a son. Now God wanted to take the child back. Why should I be unhappy? I am like the bank." This reply of the learned, experienced and intelligent father delighted Brahmachari Rabinarayan. He bowed down at his feet and returned to the Ashram.

Once a telegram came to the Ashram addressed to Brahmachariji, which read "Mother serious. Start immediately." Without a second thought Brahmachariji set out to visit his parents. As the bus approached the final destination very early in the morning he saw his father waiting for him. On the way home Rabinarayan asked his father about his mother's health. The father replied, "Your mother is all right. But the Divine Mother is serious!" The son could not understand.

Then the father continued, "In six months practice of the technique you taught, now I have perfected Khechari Mudra. I wanted you to come here and see and to teach me some higher technique. That was the cause of the telegram." Haripada was extremely diligent in his practice and advanced rapidly on the path of Kriya.

Previously he would not drink a drop of water until he finished his worship, which would be about 2 p.m. But his present Guru, his beloved son, taught him how to feel divine vibration in the entire body and complete external worship in a short time and have more time for meditation. Now, in the company of Brahmachariji, he took breakfast after his morning meditation.

Phanu Bagdi

"Narayan, Hey Narayan !" - chanting the name of God, with tears rolling down his cheeks, Phanu was coming towards Haripada and Brahmachari Rabinarayan,. He was in divine ecstasy to see his dear Rabi, whom he had worshipped several times in his childhood with flowers and tears. He could see the sainthood in the boy. His vision had come true. Now the same child was a divine soul, a realized person, Brahmachari Rabinarayan. When Phanu, untouchable and of low caste, was about to bow down at the holy feet of this great saint, Brahmachariji embraced him with both his arms. Phanu was like a rushing river merging in the ocean, losing its own identity. He expressed his long cherished desire to get initiated from Brahmachariji. Pure and sacred was the heart of Phanu, though born in a low-caste family. The true seeker in him was expecting a divine touch from this realized soul. It was against the custom for an untouchable to be initiated by a brahmin or to chant the sacred pranava, "Om". To test the attitude of his learned father, Brahmachari Rabinarayan looked at his father's face. His father said, "Please initiate him without any hesitation. It is my wish."

Phanu took a bath and came with flowers wearing new clothes that Haripada brought. He was initiated and progressed very quickly in his spiritual practice. Looking at his quick spiritual evolution and the visible signs of peace, bliss and joy, Haripada used to say, "Phanu is not an ordinary soul. In the previous life, because of yogabhrasta, deviation from the path of meditation, may be due to some mistake, he got such situation in this life."

Jayadurga was a devoted lady of the village of Habibpur and was initiated by Brahmachari Rabinarayan. After her initiation she was so engrossed in her Kriya practice that she was not able to look after the basic needs of life. So a small cottage was built very close to the house of Haripada, where she lived and meditated for the rest of her life.

In the Holy Bible, it is said, "A prophet is not honored in his town." But here was an exception. All the family members and hundreds of villagers took initiation from Brahmachari Rabinarayan and tried to transform their lives. Even today, the older people of the village remember his love and compassion.

Father Haripada progressed rapidly in Kriya practice and was initiated into higher Kriya. Towards the last part of his life he was extremely ill and bed-ridden. Hearing the condition of his father, Brahmachari Rabinarayan visited him with a young man from Orissa and stayed for several weeks. He was personally caring for his father day and night. Serving his father with love became his 'saadhana, spiritual practice.

Even while bed-ridden, Haripada was practicing Kriya mentally. One day he requested his son, "Can you please give me fourth Kriya? Now I am to leave the body. But this teaching will help me in my next life." His wish was fulfilled. Such was his belief and conviction.

Slowly the father was recovering. He had firm faith in his youngest son. Being wealthy and prosperous, he wished to build an Ashram for his monk-son on his own property. He gave all his material wealth, especially gold and jewelry to Brahmachariji and entrusted him with distribution among all others after his demise.

Leaving the young man of Orissa to take care of the father, Brahmachari Rabinarayan left for Puri. Haripada was a good astrologer and knew his own future. Once he called his beloved wife Nabin Kali and foretold that the time of his departure was approaching and that she should be mentally prepared for that. In her destiny, there was eight years of widowhood, but she should not be worried as her youngest son, sanniyasi Thakur would look after her very well.

One morning in 1956, Brahmachariji was meditating in the temple of Shriyukteshwarji at Karar Ashram. He saw a brilliant light moving all around which remained in front of him for some time and then disappeared. Brahmachariji opened his eyes. He was convinced that this was the omen of his father's death and disclosed it to the ashramites. At 11 a.m. as they were about to eat lunch a messenger from District Police Head Quarters came to the Ashram. He was also a disciple of Brahmachariji. Looking at him Brahmachariji asked, "Do you have any special or urgent message for me?" He said, "You please finish your lunch. I will wait." Brahmachariji asked, "Did you bring the news of my father's demise?" The police officer was surprised.

On the same day he left for his native place. The death of the father was a great shock for the mother Nabin Kali. She lost consciousness for several days. Rabinarayan managed to bring her back to her senses with his love and care.

The Hindu death rituals are extremely elaborate and continue for several days. Haripada being a reputed and renowned person of the community, many respected and scholarly priests and the principal of Sanskrit College came to participate in the death ceremony. Brahmachari Rabinarayan sat there calm and composed, without any sign of sorrow while all others were weeping remembering the father's love and care. All the priests and Brahmin scholars were impressed with his complete balanced state of mind and some of them wanted to discuss about spirituality with him.

The father's prophecy was correct. Mother Nabin Kali wanted to come to Puri and live with her youngest son "Sanniyasi Thakur" (as they lovingly named Brahmachari Rabinarayan) at

Puri. He also did not hesitate to have her do that. Brahmachari Rabinarayan wanted to do his duty as a son even though he had renounced family life. He was like Kapila serving his mother Devahuti (described in the Bhaagavatam, Kapila is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu). He took very good care of her in every respect. Every evening he gave a talk on mythology and other scriptures, not only for the benefit of his mother, but also several widows who lived in the vicinity of the Ashram.

Nabin Kali from her childhood was generous and charitable. Many times she would take money from her youngest son, for someone to dig a well to solve a water problem, or to help someone with their daughter's marriage, or a son's Upanayana. At Karar Ashram she started serving poor women and girls. On the eleventh moon in each fortnight (called as Ekadashi Day) she would ask her monk-son to provide food and clothing to them. Her loving son never said 'no' to his own mother in all such works of charity. She was a source of inspiration to many.

She was also interested in inviting monks to the Ashram and feeding them. Once, the head of Bhola Giri Sannyas Ashram, the Mahamandaleshwar, Swami Mahadevananda Giri, was in Puri. Nabin Kali expressed her wish to invite Mahamandaleshwarji to Karar Ashram and serve him. When a reputed monk like Mahamandaleshwarji was to be invited, there were proper arrangements to be made. More than thirty monks came to Karar Ashram on that day. Brahmachariji (at that time Swamiji) washed their feet, and worshipped them with all due honors. Looking at the expertise of Swamiji in ritualistic practice and knowledge of scriptures, Mahamandaleshwarji was highly pleased.

Everybody in the neighborhood of the Ashram loved Nabin Kali as a mother. Once during her stay in the ashram, she fell ill suffering from blood dysentery. The monk-son (Swamiji) did not hesitate to serve her and clean her. He considered his mother an incarnation of the Divine Mother.

Once some people while visiting the Ashram came to her and bowed down. She offered them seats. During the conversation they requested her to give them some practical advice. She said with love, "Look. I have given a son to you all to give you advice. Please go to him, listen and practice."

She lived for eight years after the death of her husband. Her life was a life of simplicity, purity and love. She left her body in consciousness in the year 1964, in the village home of Habibpur. Her beloved son, even though a Swami, did not hesitate to participate in the death ceremony of this divine lady, whose life was full of love and service.

From Brahmacharya to Sannyasa

According to the vedic tradition, the path of sannyasa, the monastic life-style, was considered to be the best among the four different life-styles. Brahmacharya was the beginning and sannyasa was the end. In the middle, one can be a grhastha - householder and a vanaprastha following life of non-attachment and service, sannyasa is inner transformation through a self-disciplined divine life.

There are two types of sannyasa - vidvat sannyasa - to accept monastic life style after realization and another, vividisha sannyasa -to embrace monkhood for self realization.

Blessed are those who really embrace this life from the core of their heart, not out of emotion or through persuasion.

In the scriptures it is described, *danda kamandalu dhaarana maatrena nara naarayano bhavet*. - one who carries a water pot and staff in the hand becomes divine. In essence, one who has his spine (staff) and the brain (water pot) under complete control is divine.

Since 1938, Brahmachari Rabinarayan was leading a strict celibate life of sincere meditation and achieved the rarest state of nirvikalpa samddhi. Now he had the wish to accept the monastic life of sannyas. His Guruji, Swami Shriyukteshwarji was no more. Although Swami Satyanandaji of Sevayatan, Jhengram Midnapore was also a monk-guru, he wished to take sannyasa from H. H. Jagadguru, Swami Bharati Krishna Teertha.

Before giving sannyasa, Jagadguruji wanted to know more about the family of Brahmachari Rabinarayan. While he was in Calcutta he sent for the brother of Brahmachari Rabinarayan who was an attorney in Calcutta and inquired more about Brahmachariji and his family. He found out about the divine nature of Rabinarayan from his childhood, the aristocratic and spiritual tradition of the Bhattacharya family, the death of the father Haripada, and that the widowed mother Nabin Kali had no trouble for maintenance. Jagadguruji was extremely delighted to hear all these facts about his beloved disciple.

His twenty years of Brahmachari life came to an end on May 27, 1959, on a Wednesday. Consulting the Indian calendar, Jagadguru Shankaracharya chose the 13th of Vaisakh as the day for the initiation of Brahmachari Rabinarayan into monastic life. Before taking sannyas from this renowned monk, Brahmachari Rabinarayan wanted to know in detail about monastic life, its restrictions and the many do's and don'ts. The able Guru was happy to answer his questions in a befitting manner.

Rabinarayan's Questions and the Jagadguru's Answers :

Q. What should be the quality of a monk?

A. A monk should always be humble, and God-conscious. He should not have the slightest sense of greed or lust. When he accepts the sacred robe of ochre color, a symbol of fire in the body, he should be free from body consciousness and be always merged in the divine.

Q. Is a monk allowed to participate in social and religious functions like marriage, *upanayana* (thread ceremony), etc.?

A. A monk should try to avoid the social festivals. Only when a disciple is holding a samskara ceremony like marriage or thread ceremony, he can be present there to bless the occasion and come back. The presence of the monk may elevate them spiritually.

Q. Can a monk serve his old parents?

A. Even after renouncing family life, a monk if necessary can serve his old parents. Look at the example of Adi Shankara, considered the incarnation of Lord Shiva, who was present at the time of death of his mother and performed her funeral rites.

Q. What is the foremost duty of the monk ?

A. A monk should spend his time in spiritual practice, meditation, self study and study of Holy Scriptures. The monk should always manifest universal love.

The conversation continued for a good period of time. At the end, Jagadguruji asked, "Brahmachariji! On the day of sannyas I will wash your feet and worship you as living Shiva. Do you have objection to it? If I touch your feet, can you tolerate it?"

Humble Rabinarayan answered, "Divine Gurudev! During initiation of disciples into Kriya Yoga, I wash their feet, offer flower at their feet, I worship and bow at their feet." Jagadguruji was extremely delighted to hear this.

On the auspicious day of sannyasa along with Brahmachari Rabinarayan, another co-worker, a disciple of Paramahansa Yoganandaji, Girindra Dey also was also initiated into monk's life.

The initiation ceremony was conducted in Shriyukteshwar temple on the premises of Karar Ashram. Jagadguru Bharati Krishna initiated them on behalf of Swami Shriyukteshwar, with the monastic name of 'Giri'. He directed Rabinarayan not to shave his head. As a tradition one was to shave the head and conduct many ritualistic ceremonies. This was unnecessary since he had already lived the life of a brahmacharin in the Ashram for more than twenty years.

At the end of the sannyasa (initiation) ceremony Guru gives the robe, staff and the name. He gave the monastic name of Swami Hariharananda Giri. Swami is a title used before the name of a monk and Giri is one of the ten orders of the guru-disciple tradition of monks chosen by Adi Shankaracharya. Rabinarayan became Hariharananda. Girindra Dey became Swami Vidyananda Giri, meaning the bliss of knowledge.

Jagadguru Shankaracharya then explained the meaning of the name: It is consisting of three words *Hari*, *Hara* and *Ananda*. *Hari* and *Hara* are two aspects of the divine trinity, sustenance and dissolution of the universe, and *ananda* is bliss. There is a deeper meaning to these three syllables: *ha*, *ra* and *i*

In the scriptures it is described:

*hakara pingala varna sarva varna varottamah /
rakara tejovarnah syat ikara sakti dayakah //*

ha - represents the supreme color of the rising sun.

ra - is the brilliance of the flame.

i - the source of energy.

These three syllables combined together *ha-ra-i* is *hari* and *ha-ra* is *hara* - *ananda* is bliss. Hariharananda is the state of divine bliss arising in real formless state.

Then the Guru continued; "Renounce the life of *brahmana* and Brahmachari. Now you are a Swami in the Vedic tradition and follower of Shri Shankaracharya." The disciple with humility and love bowed down at the feet of this renowned monk; as he blessed him with Sanskrit chants fulfilling the divine will of Almighty Lord.

On the day of monk's initiation, as a tradition, the newly initiated monk begs food from a few houses and takes food on the roadside, or under a tree. The food received from begging is considered the most holy food. One should not choose the house to beg from. So on this day, Swami Hariharananda, the new monk, begged food from the nearby sweeper's colony. In Indian society, they were not only untouchables; they were lowest among all castes. They all knew about Swamiji for a long time because of his charitable work and meditation. Swamiji stood in front of a sweeper's residence begging food. All the people of the locality assembled there to witness this beautiful scene. The lady from the house brought some food in her hands with tears in her eyes and offered it with great devotion.

One is reminded of an incident in the life of Adi Shankara. Once after a holy bath he was bringing water from the Ganga to the temple, for the *abhiseka* of Lord Vishwanath. On the way a sweeper considered to be unclean and untouchable was cleaning the street. While cleaning he came closer and closer to Adi Shankara. Looking at this unusual behavior of the man, Adi Shankara said, "Please go away, go away from me." Then the sweeper asked, "Who will go away from whom? The body of five elements from another body of five elements, or the soul - pure consciousness from the soul?" This was a great education for Shankara. He never expected such a question from a sweeper who is considered to be an ordinary person. He forgot all his *samskara* (habits) of being a *brahmin* and a monk, and bowed down at the feet of this sweeper praying, "Let he be a sweeper or a *brahmin*, he who has this kind of realization is really a guru to me." He spontaneously composed a prayer of five verses, dedicated to God in the form of the sweeper, called *manisha panchakam*.

On this day, Swami Hariharananda proved himself to be free from all *samskaras* of being a brahmin, a Brahmachari, and was shining as a glorious *sannyasi*, a monk, a *swami*, a true propagator of vedic spiritual wisdom.

From this day, H. H. Swami Bharati Krishna became his *sannyasa* guru. Even after being a monk he never missed the opportunity of serving his beloved Guruji. H. H. Sankaracharya Swami Bharati Krishna Teertha was advanced in age. He entrusted Swami Hariharananda with performing on his behalf, the daily ritualistic worship customarily done by the pontiff, the head of this great monastery. Jagadguruji had a strong desire to appoint his beloved Swami Hariharananda as the successor to this age-old math, the most respectable position of Shankaracharya. It was no doubt a rare opportunity and a great blessing for the Gurudev. Swami Hariharananda, a free soul, humbly with due regards replied, "Gurudev! You know my life is fully dedicated to the service of my Guru Swami Shriyukteshwar. The position of Shankaracharya is full of restricted activities, ritualistic practices with all the paraphernalia and protocol. I am to serve my Guruji staying in Karar Ashram and maintain the tradition of Kriya Yoga. Please excuse me for not being able to accept." The loving Guru could understand the mind and heart of his beloved disciple.

Beloved Gurudev H. H. Jagadguru Shankaracharya Bharati Krishna Teertha left his mortal body on February 2, 1960, in Bombay. This was no doubt a great loss to a loving disciple like Swami Hariharananda.

Miracles or God's Love

People who have read in 'Autobiography of a Yogi' about the miraculous life of many monks, or episodes from the life of Moses or Jesus wonder, "Are these miracles possible? Can this

really happen?" Every human life is a miracle. We need the vision to perceive it. Every breath is a miracle, which keeps life in this body, we must realize it. The life of a spiritually elevated soul is a miraculous gift of God for all, meant to turn our mind to the presence of God and perceive Divine Love. Every happening in our life has a message from God, but many cannot comprehend this.

To live in Puri is a great opportunity. On one side is the vast ocean roaring aloud the glory of God, the Creator, and on the other the lofty temple of Lord Jagannath with a furling flag visible from miles away, reminding all not to forget the Divine. Every particle of sand in this city is sanctified by the presence of saints, sages, seers and seekers.

Brahmachari Rabinarayan had a deep desire to stay in Puri for some time and to intensify his own meditation and sadhana in his Guru's Ashram. But he became ill with chronic indigestion. His body was emaciated. As a routine after evening meditation, he would visit Jagannath Temple for darshan and prayer. One day he stood in the Sanctum Sanctorum and prayed to the Lord, "Is it not thy wish for me to stay in this holy city and meditate? This body is becoming an obstacle." After that he went to the market to purchase some fruits. He paid the money and waited as the shopkeeper weighed the fruit. The shopkeeper and his friend were engaged in a discussion about health. The friend advised the shopkeeper, "By taking good food alone one may not get good health. One should go to the doctor and get checked for worms in the intestine." He also mentioned an ayurvedic medicine as a cure.

Brahmachari Rabinarayan was listening to the conversation of these two friends. He understood it was an indirect message from Lord Jagannath, an answer to his prayer. He went straight from there to a nearby ayurveda pharmacy and purchased a few bottles of that medicine. He used the medicine and it worked wonders. He recovered completely from his illness. Later he prayed to Jagannath, "Oh Lord! I came for a few months to live here. You kept me for a good period of time with you. This is your love."

From 1948 on, low blood pressure became a regular complaint in the life of Swamiji. But towards the middle of 1958 the condition became alarming. He was seriously ill. He was not able to get up from his bed. He thought it was the end. From his astrological chart, he knew that it was the worst period of his life. He was expecting the inevitable to happen at any time, any moment.

The night of September 27, 1958, he was praying to the Divine Mother as he lay on his bed. No prayer goes unanswered, for God is full of compassion. It only requires a little patience. The Divine Mother Kali appeared before him in her Divine Effulgence.

"The entire room was full of light!" he narrated later. "Beautiful aromatic fragrance was spreading all around. Her charming smile was clearly visible through a condensed mass of blue light surrounding her." She raised a hand towards him and said, "You will be all right, my child. You will live to fulfill the mission for which you have come here. However; you will have to suffer a little more, but have patience. I am with you always." The vision faded away. He gained a lot of strength. The ailment disappeared. It took some days to recover completely, however.

After a few days, while bathing, he was shocked to notice a small white patch of leukoderma, near the navel. Day by day it spread all over his body on the chest, the thumb, the toes disfiguring the body.

Well, the Divine Mother saved his life from a fatal condition, blessing him to fulfill his divine mission, but who would come near a man afflicted with such a disease? He began praying to Her again.

One day, while in his room and meditating, he saw a flash of light in front of him and through the light an address was visible which read, Dr. Ghosh, Dharamtala Street, Calcutta, 7 p.m. He took this as a message of the Mother. He reached the place and found the name of the doctor on the door. It was a great surprise to find Dr. Ghosh a busy medical practitioner of dermatology alone at 7 p.m. He was sitting and waiting for someone to arrive. He examined Swamiji and gave him some medicine for external use. After a few days application, the disease stopped spreading, but the already discolored patches continued to be the same. Several months passed without any noticeable change in the color of the skin.

Then, another day during meditation, he heard a sweet voice, "Dr. S. K. Mitra, Calcutta." This again, as he understood, was a further direction of the Divine Mother to consult another physician. But this was not easy. In the previous message, a complete address was given, but now only a name. It was extremely difficult to locate this doctor in the bustling metropolitan city of Calcutta.

He was trying to search and locate this doctor on the streets of Calcutta. One day, on the way, he met an old friend who mentioned that he was on his way to the clinic of Dr. S. K. Mitra, Dermatologist. Brahmachari, being glad that the search for the physician had finally ended, went to the clinic of Dr. Mitra with his friend. He explained to the doctor the purpose of the visit with details of his suffering and the indications of the Divine Mother from time to time. The doctor listened to all the details patiently but said nothing. He remained busy with his patients while Brahmachari waited patiently for hours. Then he approached the doctor and asked him if he would prescribe some medicine for him. The doctor stopped his work, stared at him and said, "What medicine do you expect me to prescribe for an ailment ordained by the Divine Mother? She gave you my name but has not yet told me the name of the medicine to be administered. You may please wait."

A little later two medical representatives from a medical firm in Haryana came to the doctor with samples of medicines. One of them placed two sample bottles of medicine saying it was a new remedy manufactured recently for leukoderma and allied skin diseases. The doctor asked for two more bottles from them. After the representatives left, the doctor who was a devoted soul gave the medicines to Brahmachari and said, "Here is the medicine which the Divine Mother has sent for you." After a few days of application of the medicine, the disease was almost cured, only a slight mark on the skin is still visible.

On another occasion, a person came to Puri Ashram early in the morning, looking for Swamiji. When he saw him, he prostrated at his feet and prayed for him to save his life. He looked pale and sick. He narrated that he was suffering from a serious ailment, which could not be cured medically. Giving up all hope of recovery through further treatment, he had performed severe penance at the temple of Shri Tarakeshwar. He had a vision of Tarakeshwar, an aspect of Lord Shiva, who directed him to approach Swami Hariharananda of Karar Ashram for remedy. Swamiji took pity on him although he did not know what to do.

He went to the temple of Shriyukteshwar and meditated to find a solution. Then he saw a flash of light and within the mass of bright light was a small creeper with yellow flowers. He saw this vision repeatedly and knew that this plant could heal the ailment. He collected the tender plant with the roots and treated the ailing man. He was cured completely.

Being a true philanthropist, he kept many poor, helpless orphan children in the ashram and took good care of them. Even when the financial condition of the ashram was not good, he helped them in every respect. One evening, all the children came to Brahmachariji and requested him. "We want sandesh tomorrow. Can you give it?" He consented without a second thought. Then they said, "We will eat sandesh for breakfast, lunch and dinner. We will not take any rice or anything else. Only sandesh! "

Brahmachariji was praying to God about his promise to the children. There was not enough money for that. The morning came. Brahmachariji was going to his meditation room where the idol of Mother Kali was installed. All the children of the Ashram ran towards him to remind him of last night's promise. Brahmachariji smiled and said, "Please, all of you meditate outside until I finish my worship." He closed the room and was absorbed in meditation and a prayer for the children near the Mother Divine.

After a while he came back into consciousness, hearing someone knock on the door. He opened the door and saw an old lady who lived in the neighborhood, standing with a big metal plate of sweets covered in a new piece of cloth and a holding a metal glass of water. Brahmachariji was surprised. As was customary, he took the plate from her hand, and offered the sweets to Divine Mother with the appropriate ritual. After that, taking a couple of sweets from the plate he was returning the rest but the lady objected, "No, no. Please do not do that. All these sweets are for you, including the plate and glass. Only give me a couple of sweets for my family." When questioned, she narrated that the previous night she had a dream of the Divine Mother, who instructed her to bring sweets to the Ashram, which she did. The children outside were overjoyed to have the sweets, while Brahmachariji had tears of gratitude and love for the Mother Divine.

Swami Hariharananda was in Patna. There was a prominent attorney of Patna High Court, who took initiation at that time. He had a regular habit of worshipping the Divine Mother, standing in water up to the waist, and chanting mantras for hours. Swamiji during his instructions said to him not to waste such a long time in chanting, and spend the time for meditation. But no one wants to give up a practice, which he had been following for several years. Displeased, he said, "You are my Kriya Teacher. You should not give me other advice."

At this remark, only two words emerged from Swamiji's mouth, "Hey Ma! (Oh Mother). After the completion of the program in Patna, Swamiji left for Puri and was busy with Ashram work. He received a telegram with a money order from the said attorney, requesting Swamiji to come back to Patna, since his daughter was suddenly ill and not recovering.

Swamiji, the incarnation of compassion, left for Patna by the evening train. He reached the palatial residence of the attorney. He was well received. When he asked the cause of their telegram, they said their daughter was suffering from extremely high fever which was unrelenting, even with the best medical care. She was almost in an unconscious state, sometimes crying and uttering "Gurudev." Then the attorney begged apology for his misconduct.

Swamiji entered the room of this little girl, and closed the door. He sat near her bed and placing his hand on her forehead, started meditating. After a short period of meditation, the fever was gone, the child opened her eyes and started talking with Swamiji; "Gurudev, when did you come?" The parents were eagerly waiting outside. Listening to the voice of their

daughter, they could wait no longer. They knocked on the door and came in to see their smiling daughter.

It was in July 1974. Swarniji was in Germany. He got a subtle message from Shriyukteshwar. He appeared near him and directed him to leave for India, as there was some trouble in Puri Ashram. He got this message repeatedly. He then decided to come back to India, canceling all his programs. When he came to the airlines counter and inquired, the lady officer at the counter replied that there was no seat available for two weeks. Swarniji told the lady that since his Gurudev wanted him to go back soon, there must be some accommodation for him. She lost her temper and frowned at Swamiji and used very unkind words about Indian monks.

When Swarniji repeatedly requested her with love to be calm and kind, she softened and looked through the reservation of seats on the next flight. She then suddenly exclaimed, "Oh Swami! I am sorry. Please excuse me. There is one seat vacant from here to Frankfurt and from there, two seats to Delhi."

Then she came out from behind her desk, caught his hands and requested Swarniji to excuse her as she spoke ill of Indian monks. Then Swarniji replied, "My mother! I am not at all unhappy. I know that when my Guru directed me to go, surely he would devise some means to get a seat in the plane for my journey."

It was long ago in Puri. Swamiji went into town to purchase some materials. There were some people on the way and one of them started speaking ill of monks in the presence of Swamiji. They were expecting him to be irritated. He did not react and left the place with a smile.

Immediately after Swamiji's departure, this man suffered a dislocation of the jawbone and he was unable to speak. Others, who thought it was the result of his misconduct towards an innocent monk, brought the man to the ashram and requested Swamiji to forgive him. At first he could not think of what to do. Then he thought of a remedy. The man was wearing Indian clothes - a 'lungi.' Swamiji went near him and whispered to another person standing close by to pull down his lungi in the presence of others, which he did. Out of shame, the afflicted person cried "Uph," and his jaw was relocated. He could talk. He touched the feet of Swamiji and begged apology.

Chapter 7: The Company You Keep

He who walks with the wise grows wise.
— *Proverbs (13:20)*

March of 1984, the Karar Ashram was overcrowded with disciples from all around the world. In a room, two swamis who had not seen each other for a year sat down for lunch. The food was served, and after prayers they sat together, eating food from the same plate. One ate silently while the other told stories. Some brahmacharis overheard one beautiful narrative. It went like this:

"There were two friends who met each other after a long separation. Both had lost their fathers since their last meeting. They sat together eating food from the same plate. The first friend asked the second, "Can you please tell me the cause of your father's death?" He relayed

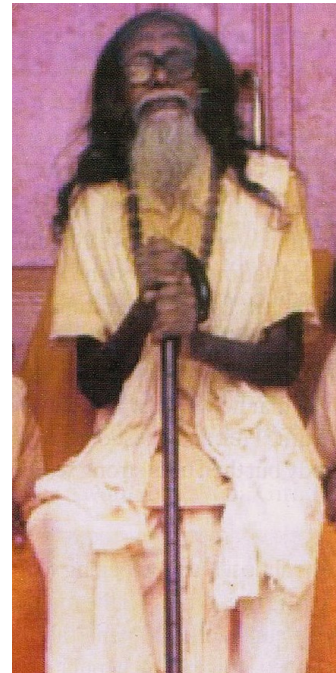
the incident in detail - how his father fell sick, the doctor's treatment, and ultimately the death. While he was talking, his companion continued eating.

As soon as he finished telling the story, he wanted to know how the other man's father had died. The listening friend replied tersely that his father was old, sick, and had died, and then he continued eating. When the long-winded friend looked at the plate, it was almost empty."

When the swami completed his story, everyone present burst into laughter. The two friends sitting for lunch were none other than Swami Narayan Gin, the well-fed listener, and Swami Hariharananda Gin, the hungry talker.

The Divine Friendship of Swami Narayan and Rabinarayan

Swami Narayan Gin was one of the youngest disciples of Swami Shriyukteshwar Giri. He was born in a Bengali family in the district of Mednipur. As an adolescent, he met his master. The boy was staying with his maternal uncle near a place where there were many disciples of Shriyukteshwarji; the boy also visited many Kriya centers in this part of Bengal. He surrendered at the master's feet. Swami Shriyukteshwarji accepted him as his disciple. He allowed the young man to remain with him to look after his personal needs. Although his monastic name was Swami Narayan Giri, Shriyukteshwarji called him "Prabhuji" which means "beloved of the Lord," because he looked after his guruji with such great care and love.



Swami Shriyukteshwar was such a strict and disciplined master that usually no one dared to go close to him or stay with him for long. He would not hesitate to be harsh in response to a disciple's slightest mistake. Yet simple and sincere Prabhuji served his guru for more than twelve years. He was never upset over the master's rebukes, for he said they were a nice means to eliminate ego. Shriyukteshwarji said to him one day, "Prabhuji, you are such a devoted, faithful, and tireless worker that I want to leave my body while in your care!" And in fact, he did on the 9th of March, 1936; Shriyukteshwarji entered mahasamadhi in Karar Ashram while Prabhuji attended him. Because of this devoted service, he was loved by all the other senior monks and disciples, particularly Paramahansa Yoganandaji and Swami Satyanandaji.

Shriyukteshwarji usually spent four months in Puri, four months in Benares, and four months in Serampore and other parts of Bengal. Traveling with him, Prabhuji met many advanced yogis and monks. In 1932, when Rabinarayan met Shriyukteshwarji in Serampore for the first time, he also met this young, devoted and dedicated soul, who was serving his guruji and all the visitors at the ashram tirelessly with love and affection. From that time on, they became close friends, sharing their experiences with open hearts.

Prabhuji spent a lot of time in silence, never wanting prominence in organizational activities. So after the mahasamadhi of Shriyukteshwarji, he decided to spend even more time in silence and seclusion, and to become increasingly absorbed in Kriya practice. When Rabinarayan joined Karar Ashram, he was extremely happy to see that his close friend had embraced the monastic lifestyle. Prabhuji's maternal uncle wanted to give him some land on which he could construct a hermitage. He discussed this offer with his friend Rabinarayan and both of them

decided he should accept this proposal. This is how the ashram in Bhisindipur came into existence.

The ashram began as a small mud house, named Yuktashram in memory of their beloved guru Swami Shriyukteshwarji. With the financial assistance of Brahmachari Rabinarayan and the on-site supervision of Prabhuji, it became a beautiful hermitage in a completely secluded locality. As the area had no school for children, they started a school called Shriyukteshwar Vidyayatan in Bhisindipur.

Prabhuji stayed permanently in the Bhisindipur ashram, visiting only his guru's ashram in Puri every year in March for two weeks to participate in the foundation day celebration. In the regular Sunday sat sang at Karar Ashram and the foundation day celebrations, Prabhuji always had a special role of performing the formal worship of the gurus and the arati in the shrine of Shriyukteshwarji. He did this with great love, waving the light with one hand and ringing the bell with the other.

Prabhuji, like his guru, was a strict and disciplined monk. He talked little, and always slowly and sweetly. He was good at training monks, so all the new brahmacharis of Karar Ashram were sent to Bhisindipur for monastic training under his strict supervision. At this time there was no electricity in the ashram; only oil lamps were used. Like his guruji, he would discourage the brahmacharis from wasting oil at night. He said, "Meditate at night and read in the day." He would recollect his precious time with Shriyukteshwarji and recall how strict he was in his daily lifestyle. Every day, depending upon the position of the moon, he would decide what to cook and what to avoid, just as Shriyukteshwarji had done. He also said not to talk while eating; he was the perfect exemplar of one who never wasted time in idle gossip. He advised studying the Gita and meditating, avoiding all negligence. One winter's evening in Bhisindipur ashram when there was no electricity, hot water, or heat, Swami Hariharananda, who was staying there, wanted to eat - dinner in the kitchen because the wood-burning stove for cooking made it nice and warm, but Prabhuji politely refused to allow it. He said it was the ashram rule not to eat food in the kitchen, and this discipline had to be followed.

Prabhuji had no disciples of his own, and if anyone approached him for Kriya initiation, he always sent them to Swami Hariharananda. He was a thin man with a frail body, and whenever he was sick, his friend Swami Hariharananda looked after him. Early in 1985, he was ill when he came to Karar Ashram for the foundation day celebration. His dear friend Swami Hariharanandaji asked him to stay on in the ashram so the brahmacharis could take care of him. He agreed, thinking the healthy climate would help him to recover, and also liking to be under the care of people in his guru's ashram as well as near the temple of Lord Jagannath.

In April 1985, Swami Hariharananda left for the West, but he stayed in regular contact with Prabhuji; he instructed the brahmacharis to take good care of him. In October of that year, Prabhuji became seriously ill and was hospitalized in Puri. All the brahmacharis and swamis were in constant attendance. Prabhuji remained continuously in a state of meditation and God consciousness. He once said that his strong desire was to leave his body in the holy city of Puri, where his beloved guruji had breathed his last. When Swami Hariharanandaji heard of his friend's critical illness, he cancelled his programs in the West and returned to India, for he wanted to be by his friend's side when he left his body. However, God's will was different. Prabhuji breathed his last in the hospital before Swamiji could reach Puri. His body was cremated with due honors and in his memory, the tradition of feeding monks of various

monasteries and other people (sadhu bhandara) was held both at Karar Ashram and Yuktashram in Bhisindipur. Swami Hariharananda attended both ceremonies.

Swami Narayan Giri was a shining example of silent service, sincere spiritual practice, deep devotion and complete surrender to the guru. His smile always remained fresh in the mind of his friend and co-worker, Swami Hariharananda, and the many others acquainted with him.

A Flower's Fragrance

The light of the rising sun spreads all around, and the fragrance of a flower in bloom reaches everywhere. When there is nectar in the flower, bees fly towards it from every direction. When fruit ripens, the color changes, indicating that it is ready to eat. Then, it gradually detaches itself from the tree. So also when a person attains perfection, it is self-evident and people will come to know of it.

It is said in the Upanishads that looking at the face of a disciple (upamanyu), the guru would know if he has attained Self- realization. The face is preface to the man and the eyes reveal the state of enlightenment. So the news of Swami Hariharananda's spiritual glory slowly spread.

Dr. Hare Krishna Mahatab was a famous freedom fighter who was once India's Industry Minister, Governor of Maharashtra, and several times the Chief Minister of Orissa. After hearing of Swami Hariharananda's powerful spiritual qualities, he sought Kriya initiation from him. With this end in view, he planned to visit Karar Ashram during a function celebrating the visit to India of Shri Daya Mata, the President and Sangha Mata of the Self Realization Fellowship (SRF) and the Yogoda Satsanga Society (YSS). There was a great congregation at Karar Ashram, and Dr. Mahatab came as a spectator, sitting silently in the audience. At the end of the program, he received a leaf plate full of prasada from the hand of Swamiji, and looked into his eyes. During this memorable moment he expressed his desire to be initiated on the morning of his birthday by this great guru. His prayer was granted and he received Kriya initiation from Swami Hariharananda. From that day on he received great joy and spiritual growth through the practice of Kriya Yoga. He said to Swamiji one day, "You are hiding yourself behind the walls of the ashram, unnoticed by many. If a flower is growing outside, bees can come to it for nectar, but if it is inside a room the bees will not come. Allow me to take you to meet others so that they also might benefit from your teachings. Please do not deny my request." Swamiji agreed.

First he took Swamiji to a conference for state officials, where Swami Hariharananda encouraged them to practice meditation to increase their efficiency in work and to enjoy inner peace. Owing to this meeting, many of the high-ranking administrators and police officers in the state became his disciples. On another occasion, he took Swamiji to a conference of several hundred students and professors of Utkal University in Bhubaneswar. The students had received a modern education without any teachings on the great spiritual heritage of India. A challenging situation developed when, in their ignorance, they raised several questions about India's spirituality, demanded answers from Swamiji before the lecture, threatening to leave the hall if they did not get satisfactory replies. Among several questions asked, one concerned Mother Kali and why one should worship her, a naked vulgar lady, standing on the bosom of her husband with a sword in one hand and human head in the other.

Swamiji explained that spiritual truths are very subtle and cannot be grasped with an extroverted mind; only in deep meditation are they revealed. Swamiji explained the inner meaning of idol worship and its message for humanity. He said we do not worship the idol itself, but try to practice the truth that it symbolizes. Shiva lying down as though sleeping or dead is the symbol of the purusha (Self), and Kali standing on the bosom of Shiva symbolizes the manifested union of purusha (Self) and prahriti (material world, nature). The Self is unmanifest, remaining unnoticed; and prakriti, the divine manifestation, appears to be active and alluring. Without purusha, prahriti has no existence. Union of prakriti and purusha is the cause of creation and the drama of life. Prakriti is always naked. If the eyes are not open (naked) one cannot see. Kali, being naked, is the symbol of all the sense organs actively engaged in the world.

Electricity can flow through an insulated wire, but to use electricity one must remove the insulation from the end of the wire and connect it to the power source. To remove the insulation is to make it naked. The electric wire carrying limited volts is always connected to a generator, its source, where there is extremely high voltage. Similarly the human body is an insulated wire through which the divine current of life energy is continuously flowing. One end of this “wire” is connected to the source of energy, and the other end transmits energy appropriately calibrated for day-to-day use. Similarly, at one “end” we are always connected with the divine, the source of life and energy. At the other “end,” this energy pours out through the different doors of the sense organs, such as our eyes and ears, which are kept open to allow the energy to manifest in activity. This signifies the union of Shiva (Soul, or Self) and the naked Kali (the manifested energy in daily life).

The students never expected such a beautiful reply. All their questions were answered in the same metaphorical way that reveals many hidden, spiritual truths and a philosophy of life.

The audience was spellbound for hours after Swamiji’s discourse. More people heard about Swamiji, and they came from different parts of the country, and even from abroad; to meet him.

In those days the most popular daily newspaper of Orissa, with the highest circulation, was The Samaja. Its editor, Dr. Radhanatha Ratha, lived to be one hundred years old, tirelessly serving the community in many ways. During his life he became an admirer of Swamiji, so he regularly printed his writings and synopses of his discourses in the newspaper, thus further spreading Swami Hariharananda’s message to people in the state of Orissa.

His teachings were further propagated by The Theosophical Society, an international organization with branches all over the world. In the sixties and seventies, its chapter at Cuttack regularly invited Swamiji to teach them the essence of spiritual life. Every talk he delivered was unique. They once wanted to assess the spontaneity of his talks, and so asked him to speak on a topic to be announced at the time of the meeting, not in advance, and he agreed. The audience was full of the city’s intelligentsia, and after the welcoming address, the organizers announced the topic of the discourse, which was “Brahma Darshan: Realization of the Absolute.” Swamiji began his speech with a prayer to Maharshi Vyasa, and another prayer to the Absolute that was composed by Sage Vyasa. Then he asked the audience to be silent and meditate for a while. After the meditation, Swamiji delivered a soul-stirring discourse on the impromptu topic that touched the heart of everyone. He spoke in Oriya, a language in which he was not fluent. Everyone experienced the inner Truth that Brahman cannot be known through the spoken word or through books, but only in the experience of spiritual practice (sadhana).

Sometimes Swamiji's audiences were less hospitable, at least at first. Once, Professor Nigam (Principal of Rajendra College, a large educational institute in Balangir, Western Orissa), a dear disciple of Swami Hariharananda, invited him to organize a program in his college to spread the message of Kriya Yoga. Swamiji agreed, but on the day of the talk there was a students' strike. All the activities of the college were boycotted. Professor Nigam explained the situation and advised him to cancel his talk; the students were extremely undisciplined, agitated, and aggressive, he explained. However, Swamiji insisted on going ahead with his plan. In the afternoon, Swamiji was taken by car to the college. He left the car some distance from the college and walked the last distance with folded hands. His pleasing personality and calm appearance brought a great change in the minds of most of the agitated students standing outside. Some students at the back of the crowd sarcastically remarked within his hearing, "This is great! Professor Nigam has solved great problems of life like unemployment. Now this monk will teach us to renounce work altogether and become monks, so there is no need to study or get jobs but just carry a blanket and a water pot!"

When Swamiji entered the hall, only the professors and a few students were there. Slowly, though, some others began peeping through the windows. Swamiji commenced his talk with a prayer and with folded hands, in his inimitable way. There was silence in the hall as all listened with eyes closed. When the prayer was over people opened their eyes to find the hall filled with students, all eager to hear what he had to say. He discussed the role of students, and how to be successful in life. The students were impressed and asked Swamiji to come again to teach them. His appearance was also influential in ending the student agitation. Many of the students became his disciples.

On another occasion, Swami Hariharananda was invited to address a different gathering. The Divine Life Society, an international spiritual organization with headquarters in Rishikesh, one year held their "All India Conference" in Cuttack, Orissa. Several thousand delegates came from all over the world to attend, along with many monks and spiritual leaders of different religions. Swami Hariharananda's talk had a profound effect on the listeners, who sat with rapt attention. At the end of it, Kavi Yogi Swami Shuddhananda Bharati, a famous saint, poet, and yogi of South India, declared that he had never heard such a soul-elevating talk in his life. He said that every word was full of spiritual truth, that the speech was free of dogmatism, that it proffered a scientific outlook and deep insight, showing a practical way for the common person to pursue spirituality. He did not hesitate to say that "Swamiji was the best speaker at the conference." When Swamiji descended the platform, the people were so enthusiastic that he had to be escorted through the crowd. Everyone wanted to bow to him and receive his blessings.

About this time, he also spoke before a large audience in Ravenshaw College, Cuttack, the premier educational institute of the state. Following this and the Divine Life Society engagement, invitations to speak came from many parts of India, and he happily accepted.

Organizers of another historic religious conference near Madras, attended by many prominent religious leaders and hundreds of monks, also asked Swamiji to attend. As part of this program, all the monks went in a colorful procession to bathe in the ocean early in the morning. As Swamiji was not used to bathing in public or in a crowd, he did not go with them and some of his fellow monks noticed. One of the Shankaracharyas who presided over the celebration gave every speaker ten minutes to talk, although most of them spoke only for four to five minutes. When it was Swamiji's turn, he stood up to deliver his speech, but an orthodox monk objected because Swamiji had not gone for a holy bath in the ocean— Perhaps

he had not taken a bath at all that morning? His Holiness Shankaracharya looked at Swamiji, who humbly replied with a quote from the scriptures:

*ganga gangeti yo bruyat yojananam sliatairapi
sarva papa vinirmuhtva vishnu loka sa gacccJsati*

“One who utters the name of the Ganga repeatedly with devotion, even from a thousand miles away from it, is free from all sins and gets liberation.”

Swamiji inquired, “Is it only by taking a dip in the river that one’s life is purified? If this is so, then all the fish and aquatic creatures would be pure and clean and liberated.” Jagadguru Shankaracharya and the other monks were spellbound and highly impressed by this reply. Jagadguru Shankaracharya not only allowed Swamiji to speak, but encouraged him to continue speaking for more than the allotted time on his designated subject: “Unity of Faith and Practical Spirituality.” It was a rare opportunity and great honor to Swamiji.

Clearly, Swami Hariharananda’s response to people’s questions and objections was invariably wise and amiable. When he was living as a brahmachari at Karar Ashram, he visited his native town. While passing through the local court area, some of his lawyer brother’s friends and colleagues asked him, “Will you be a monk? It is not so easy to be a monk. Many people have tried to be monks, but gave up in the middle. Why are you doing this?”

He patiently listened to them and answered politely, “My brothers, I am now a brahmachari. I know it is not easy to be a monk; it is extremely difficult. I do not even have courage to say that I will be. You are aware that in our Indian culture we follow the stages of first being brahmacharya (celibate), then grihastha (householder), and so on. I am still only on the first rung of the ladder and trying a little.” Hearing this, the lawyers were silent.

Because of Swamiji’s humility and wisdom, many people sought his advice. Shri Bishwanath Dash, the former Governor of Uttar Pradesh and the former Chief Minister of Orissa, was a very spiritual person who founded the Veda Pathasala in Puri near Karar Ashram. Another institute that he established near Karar Ashram was the Chaturdham Veda Patasala where people went to study the Vedas and other scriptures. A close associate of Swamiji, he visited him frequently in the ashram and always addressed Swamiji as “Gosain Mahaprabhu,” which means “great swami and lord.” He and Dr. Radhanath Ratha, editor of The Samaja, always sought advice from Swamiji in managing Veda Pathashala.

Likewise impressed was Bhagavat Dayal Sharma, the Governor of Orissa at that time, who once was invited to preside over the foundation day celebration at Karar Ashram. When he arrived at the ashram gate he was so taken with the ashram’s spiritual environment that he was reluctant to enter with shoes (it is traditional in India not to enter holy places with shoes). There was a huge crowd behind them and Swamiji, knowing his thoughts, pushed him a little, letting him know it was acceptable for him to enter the ashram. The governor visited the shrine of Shriyukteshwarji and immediately asked, “Swamiji, please first tell me when you are going to initiate me, and only then will I attend the function.”

Swamiji replied, “Tomorrow is a good day for initiation.” Both he and his wife were initiated into Kriya Yoga the next day. Not only Bhagavat Dayal Sharma, but many other governors, chief ministers, justices, doctors, engineers, professors, and even villagers and illiterate people, all came to Swamiji to attain his spiritual guidance.

In early 1970's there was an "All-India Conference" on yoga and tantra in Chandikhol, a hilly area with a temple and a hermitage thirty miles away from Cuttack. The conference was a rare occasion where many yogis and tantriks came from all over India to participate, and Swami Hariharananda was invited to give a discourse. Because there is confusion about tantra, exacerbated by some of the people who profess to know about it but who have little experience of its inner meaning, this conference provided a good opportunity to shed some light on the subject. Without deep inner spiritual practice, one cannot know the subtlety or understand the strength of tantra.

Swamiji began his talk by quoting a verse from the tantric text in Sanskrit, the literal meaning of which was extremely vulgar. He then asked the audience, "My friends, you all claim to be tantriks, but have you practiced according to the dictum of this sloka?" Everyone was silent, because answering either yes or no would create embarrassment. Only one clever person countered by asking, "Swarniji, have you practiced this?" Swamiji bravely answered, "Yes!" All were mesmerized, and then he went on to explain beautifully the inner meaning of the verse, as well as the real essence of tantra: Tantra is not a method of sense appeasement or of gaining power to attract people and glory; it is a science of Self-evolution in order to achieve liberation. He also explained the spiritual message of pancha makara in tantra: madya (wine), mamsa (flesh), matsya (fish), mudra (fried food), and maithuna (sexual pleasure). At the end of the talk, everyone present came and bowed reverently at the feet of Swamiji.

Some incidents testify to the authenticity of Swami Hariharananda's spiritual insight. There was once a saint who lived in Puri whom many people visited to receive her darshan and satsang. One afternoon, Swamiji and many other monks listened to her talk and were discussing different spiritual matters. A young woman approached them, and everyone except Swamiji looked at her. She came straight to Swamiji and asked, "Swamiji, can you please tell me how to find this house? I am the daughter of the owner. Our house is rented and I want to see it before I leave Puri." Swamiji appropriately replied. Some of the monks asked her, "Can you please tell us why you went straight to this young swami with your question when all of us elderly monks are here?"

She replied, "When I was walking in this direction you all looked at me except him. So I thought he was the best person to ask." Then the saint, who was actually the tenant in the house of this young woman, sent her inside and said to Swamiji, "She gave you a beautiful certificate." Then she continued, "A monk should have thorough control over all the sense organs, including the eyes."

The Value of Good Company

The emblem (logo) of Shriyukteshwarji's Karar Ashram and his Kriya Yoga organization carries deep spiritual message for the spiritual seeker. It is diagram of two eyebrows, and above the midpoint of the eyebrows is the third eye. There are two Sanskrit sayings on the logo. Inscribed on the eyebrows is mahajano yenah gatah sa pantha, which translated means: "That is the path directed by the realized," from the epic Mahabharata by Maharshi Vyasa. The second inscription, below the logo, is kshanamiha sajjana sangatireha, bhavati bhavarnava tarane nauka, and this translated means: "A moment's good company will enable one to cross the ocean of the world," from the famous song, "Bhaja Govindam" by Acharya Shankara. All saints and sages enrich their lives through good company. There are many

opportunities to be in bad company; no special effort is needed. To be in good company, one's own effort and God's grace are equally important.

From his childhood, Swami Hariharananda was a seeker of Truth and at every step in life God provided him plentiful opportunities for good company, from which he learnt many lessons directly and indirectly. In childhood, his holy and divine parents molded his life in the path of love, service, and realization. In his early teens, he had practical training in spiritual life from guru Shri Bijoy Krishna and, later, the direct guidance of Shriyukteshwarji on the path of Kriya Yoga. Paramahansa Yoganandaji, Swami Satyanandaji, and Shri Sanyal Mahasaya helped him to progress rapidly towards enlightenment and, above all, he received the grace of Babaji Maharaj. The scriptural knowledge of Swami Bharati Krishna, who at that time was Jagadguru Shankaracharya of Puri, directed him on the path of renunciation. There were many other spiritual luminaries who encouraged and inspired him. Later on, many monks and holy men in turn approached him to benefit from his company. Good company acts like fire that lights the incense stick, filling the entire house with a beautiful fragrance. Some examples of the great saints of India whose good company he was fortunate to enjoy follow.

Swami Pranavananda

Swami Pranavananda was a Bengali monk who inspired the youth of Bengal to live a moral and patriotic life. He established an organization named Bharat Shevashram Sangha (BSS) with the aim of serving people, especially pilgrims, by providing free accommodation at different holy places, and helping them to receive maximum benefit from their pilgrimages. He also encouraged young men to be health-conscious and strong in body and mind.

Every year he visited Puri, for his ashram was very close to Karar Ashram. When he was there, Swami Hariharananda, then a brahmachari, never missed the opportunity to see him. Swami Pranavananda loved him and on several occasions invited him to his ashram to attend programs and to speak. Only a few weeks before the mahasamadhi of Swami Pranavanandaji, they shared the dais to deliver spiritual talks.

Swami Shivananda Saraswati

Swami Shivananda Saraswati of Rishikesh was a renowned spiritual leader, both in the East and West. Though he spent most of his time in his ashram at Rishikesh, known as Shivananda Ashram and the Divine Life Society, he was known for his unique way of teaching that made spiritual life so easy to understand. His books, numbering about three hundred, have been translated into numerous languages. Many of his advanced disciples carried his work to different corners of the globe. While on a pilgrimage in 1960, Swami Hariharananda went to Rishikesh to stay with Swami Shivananda in his ashram, where they discussed spirituality. Swami Shivananda was a medical doctor before he became a monk. Consequently, he was especially impressed to witness the pulseless and breathless state of samadhi of Swami Hariharananda.

Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi

Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi was a world-renowned spiritual leader. He lived near the holy hill of Arunachal in South India. From early childhood, he was interested in finding the secret of life and Self-realization. He spent many years in secluded meditation and reached the highest state of realization. The search for knowledge should start from within, he taught, with self-inquiry, seeking to know "Who am I?" Bhagavan silently inspired a large number of

sincere seekers to take the path of knowledge. Swami Satyanandaji lived with Ramana Maharshi for a longtime, and Paramahansa Yoganandaji also visited him. During a trip to South India, Swami Hariharananda visited him and spent some time in the holy company of this great sage of Arunachal. Swamiji recollected the moments of this meeting and spoke of his simplicity, love, detachment, and establishment in wisdom.

Mamoni of Braja Dham, a Saint of Puri

Near Karar Ashram lived an old lady saint, alone in her small ashram known as Braja Dham. In this silent atmosphere of the ashram, she spent time on her own sadhana and helping others in need. Swami Hariharananda visited her, not only for her company, but also to personally serve her. This mother saint loved Swamiji like her own child. She spiritually inspired him and gave him much practical guidance in living a monk's life. She told him how a monk should be careful in daily life and guard himself intelligently. Whenever Swamiji passed by the ashram, he always remembered her and her love.

Swami Paramananda Saraswati

Among the modern Indian spiritual leaders, Shri Vijay Krishna Goswami was a prominent figure. At the beginning of his spiritual journey, he was involved in the movement of Brahmo Samaj (a religious group who believe in formless God). Then after meeting Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, he followed the path of devotion and meditation. Later he was initiated by a spiritually advanced monk and attained spiritual enlightenment. Among his disciples, Darbeshji was well known. Another of his disciples was Swami Paramananda of Assam, who inspired many to follow the spiritual path. He had an ashram in Assam and visited Puri frequently, staying at Karar Ashram with all his disciples and enjoying the beautiful, serene atmosphere. Swami Hariharanandaji and Swami Paramananda always enjoyed each other's company and spiritual discussions. They had deep love for each other.

Swami Dvijeshananda Saraswati

Swami Dvijeshananda Saraswati was a faithful disciple of Swami Paramanandaji. He was closely associated with Swami Hariharananda from a young age, when he would go to Puri with his guruji and stay at Karar Ashram. He later inherited Braja Dham, the ashram of Mamoni, and stayed there for a long time every year, especially in the months of June and July. During the full moon of June, he joined in the annual spiritual celebration in the ashram, and many times he invited Swami Hariharananda as the guest of honor to address his devotees. Both of them benefited from their mutually good company.

Jagadguru Swami Niranjana Deva Teertha, the Shankaracharya of Puri

In 1962, after Jagadguru Swami Bharati Krishna Teertha attained mahasamadhi in Mumbai, Swami Niranjana Deva Teertha was honored as the pontiff of the age-old Shankaracharya Math. Swami Hariharananda always considered this holy monastery as his guru peetha because he was initiated by the Shankaracharya of this peetha and studied scriptures under him. Therefore, he always visited the math and enjoyed a good relationship with the new head. Swami Niranjana Deva Teertha was the disciple of Karapatriji Maharaj, whom Paramahansa Yoganandaji met during his visit to the Kumbha Mela in 1936. In 1974, when Swami Hariharanandaji was installed as Sadhu Sabhapati, Swami Niranjana Deva Teertha presided over the program. Both of these holy men developed a good friendship and high regard for each other.

Swami Vishva Pranavananda of Chakratirtha, Puri

Swami Vishva Pranavanandaji was a patriot, freedom fighter, nationalist, and highly advanced spiritual person. When he went to Puri, he lived in the Chakrateerth area and spent time with Swami Hariharananda. There is a natural tendency for spiritual people to search for others who are spiritual, to spend time together in good company discussing spiritual matters. On the spiritual path, one cannot always talk about one's own feelings, experiences, and ideas with others. Thus, the two Swamijis developed a close relationship in many ways.

Swami Yoga Jivanananda, the Founder of Mahila Kutira Shilpashrama, Puri

Swami Yoga Jivananandaji was not only a yogi, but also a great philanthropist. In the later part of his life he came to live in Puri. He saw the misery of the women who were widowed or destitute in Puri. The heart of noble people is as soft as butter. Seeing a little pain in others, the heart melts. He thought of founding an ashram for these women and discussed the project with Swamiji, with whom he had already developed a friendly relationship. Thus was created the Mahila Kutira Shilpashrama, an ashram for women, with facilities for cottage industries that provided not only employment for them, but also a good, safe and healthy atmosphere where they could live a dignified life.

Namacharya Baya Baba

Namacharya Baya Baba is a legendary personality amongst saints and mystics of modern Orissa. He was a follower of the path of devotion (bhakti), and the presence of this great, realized siddha purusha flooded the hearts of people not only in Orissa, but all over India. He founded ashrams in different parts of Orissa and in Brindavan, where he initiated continuous chanting of the divine name of the Lord. He remained in silence for a long period and told people to follow the path of spiritual life as taught in the eleventh book of the Bhagavatam. When asked about the secret of his spiritual achievement, he said that the only thing he knew was to follow the instruction of his guruji without any doubt and without expecting any result. He had been doing this, and did not know of any other achievement.

Swami Hariharananda and Baya Baba had a good, loving relationship. Baba Chaitanya Charan Das of the Bhagavata Ashram in Puri, describing the meeting of these two souls at a seven-day program on the Bhagavata at Baya Baba Ashram near Narendra Tank, Puri, said he once found Baya Baba and Swami Hariharanandaji sitting side by side full of love and bliss. One with a darker complexion and the other completely fair, they looked like Jagannath and Balabhadra in human form. Often Swamiji narrated his association with Baya Baba, whose simple teachings he appreciated.

Shri Durga Prasanna Paramahamsa

Shri Durga Prasanna Paramahamsa, the disciple of Swami Nigamananda Saraswati, was the spiritually advanced guide of many seekers. This saint often spent time with Swami Hariharananda, and they shared great love and regard for each other. Durga Prasanna had thousands of disciples and started a well-reputed organization, Shri Guru Sangha, with branches in many places where Swamiji was invited to teach devotees practical spirituality.

Several thousand devotees attended one birthday celebration for Shri Durga Prasanna Paramahamsa in his ashram located in a suburb of Kolkata. Concurrently, there was also a program in the ashram of Brahmachari Anilanandaji in Howrah, where Swami Hariharananda

was to give a talk. When Durga Prasanna Paramahansa heard that Swamiji was in Howrah, he sent messengers there requesting Swamiji to bless him with his presence on his birthday by coming to his ashram so that everyone could benefit from Swamiji's discourse. Such was the relationship between these two great souls.

Brahmachari Anilananda

Acharya Matilal Thakur was the first disciple of Priyanath Karar, later known as Swami Shriyukteshwar Giri, and the first Kriya Yoga acharya in Shriyukteshwarji's lineage. He helped Shriyukteshwarji to carry out the work of Kriya and to spread the knowledge of the Bhagavad Gita. Brahmachari Anilananda was a disciple of Acharya Matilal Thakur who stayed mostly in the ashram at Kadam Tala, Howrah. He was a great guru on the path of Kriya Yoga. He and Brahmachari Rabinarayan were very close friends and helped each other in carrying out Kriya work. When Rabinarayan became Swami Hariharananda, he was invited many times to the ashram to talk about spiritual life.

Mahanta Maharaj of Emar Math

Emar Math, a huge old complex of multi-storied buildings, is situated in front of the Lion's Gate of Shrijagannath Temple. This math was involved in organizing religious festivals and the management of the Jagannath Temple. It also managed a beautiful library of spiritual texts and scriptures known as Raghunandan Library, and helped students studying the scriptures and Sanskrit at different schools and colleges.

The head of this math was Mahant Maharaj, and when he heard about Brahmachari Rabinarayan, he was eager to meet this young enlightened one. Brahmachari Rabinarayan went to Emar Math one evening and paid his respects to the head of the math. At that time, Brahmachariji was wearing white clothing and, around his neck, three rosaries of rudraksha, tulsi, and rose seeds. Mahant Maharaj did not know who he was and asked why he was using three different rosaries representing such different deities as Shiva and Vishnu. The young brahmachari replied politely that all are the same to one who has realized the Truth, and bowing, left the place silently. Immediately after his departure, a man asked Mahant Maharaj, "Did you know that this was the young Brahmachari Rabinarayan of Karar Ashram whom you wanted to meet?" Immediately, Mahant Maharaj sent the man to bring Brahmachariji back. He returned without hesitation and they had a rewarding discussion. Mahant Maharaj asked him to stay in Emar Math and to manage his great hermitage. Although Brahmachariji did not accept the proposal, he grew very close to Mahant Maharaj, who understood his spiritual experiences. Brahmachariji invited him to preside over Karar Ashram's foundation day celebration.

About Paramahansa Hariharananda



Paramahansa Hariharananda, the greatest living master in Kriya Yoga, was the head of Karar Ashram, Puri, Orissa, founded by Swami Shriyukteshwar Giri. He is founder of the international organization Kriya Yoga Ashram, and the Kriya Yoga Institute in the U.S.A. He was first a devoted disciple of Shriyukteshwarji and, subsequently, learned other higher techniques of Kriya Yoga from Paramahansa Yogananda, Swami Satyananda Giri and Shrimat Bhupendranath Sanyal.

He is, at present, widely known as a Self-realized Kriya Yogi in the line of Shri Shyamacharan Lahiri and Swami Shriyukteshwar Giri, who instructed him to come to the Western countries and teach the authentic, original Kriya Yoga. He has attracted the attention of educated Indians and

Westerners for his vast knowledge in the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and other Hindu scriptures, including astrology, astronomy, palmistry, various systems of yoga, as well as a thorough knowledge of major Western scriptures. Through his proficiency in many languages, he is accessible to people of different lands.

The master saint of the scientific technique of Kriya Yoga, Swami Hariharananda occupies a high rank among the Indian yogis of this century. He has, above all, attained the stage of *Paramahansa*, the state of *nirvikalpa samadhi*, the highest spiritual attainment of complete cessation of breath and pulse (SoulCulture Journal, Winter 1998).